Town Population Projections 2015-2030 Governor's Office of Policy and Management February 2013

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Town projections are calculated using two pieces of information:

- 1. The recent historical growth of each town's share of its county's population and
- 2. County population projections.

The projections use linear regression analysis to estimate a constant rate of growth for each town's share of their county population between 1990 and 2010 or 2000 and 2010, whichever historical time period produces the regression with the slope closest to zero. This growth rate is then extrapolated into the future, using county population projections to project the population for each town in 2015, 2020, 2025, and 2030.

This method produces some results that may seem counterintuitive. For example, your town may be projected to shrink between 2010 and 2015, even though it showed historical population growth over the 1990-2010 period and your county is expected to grow from 2010 to 2015. Remember, the population projections for your town are based on changes in its share of your county's population. Your town's share of the county population may be declining even though your town and the county have both been growing in population. The town population projections thus rest on the assumption (among many others, including those upon which the county population projections are based) that relative growth rates of towns in a given county will continue into the future.

Let's look at an example. Portland is Maine's largest city. Its population grew slowly but steadily from 1990 through 2010. Cumberland County also grew during that time period and Cumberland County is projected to continue growing through 2030. Why do the projections show Portland losing population from 2010 to 2015 and beyond? Two factors:

- 1. Portland's share of Cumberland County's population decreased from 1990 to 2010 and the population projections are based on the assumption that this trend will continue into the future.
- 2. Cumberland County's population is growing, but it is growing at a slower and slower rate every year. So, starting in the 2010 to 2015 period, the rate at which Portland's share of Cumberland County is declining will outpace overall population growth in Cumberland County and cause Portland's population to begin shrinking.

These town population projections must be interpreted with caution. They are based on assumptions and past trends that may or may not hold into the future. In some ways, these population projections represent what will happen under a business-as-usual scenario where all the moving pieces (including migration rates, life expectancies, and sprawl patterns) continue on their current trajectories.

These projections also, by necessity, use a single methodology applied to all towns. Results may be better for some types of towns than others. Towns with smaller populations or dramatic population changes may find their projections less reliable than projections for towns with a larger, stable population. Note that some towns with population fewer than five in all three years of observations have been excluded, so town totals may not sum to county totals. Use these projections as a starting point for your planning and adjust them as you see fit. Do not hesitate to contact the State Economist at the Office of Policy and Management if you have questions or concerns about these projections.